



Vendor Speaker Advisory Notes

Introduction

This Introduction covers a range of ideals and pointers that are designed to: -

- Improve the experience for the delegate (Our Delegates)
- Increase the opportunity for subsequent talks on the same subject (You being invited back)
- Add value to the presentation for the Delegates
- Avoid poor Critique Sheet summaries for speakers
- State that these presentation opportunities are NOT a platform for product/service sales

It will cover how to position yourself as a speaker, how to present content, how to avoid 'Selling' and restricting the presentation to product features/benefits session. However, it will also point out how, in our experience, presenters get the best response and – ultimately – actually get business from this approach. The final section points out that 'Selling' presentations get scored lowly whereas 'Expert-in-field' presentations or User presentations get significantly higher scores.

The emphasis and the point

There is no doubt that presentations where the presenter positions themselves as the 'Expert-in-field' are accepted and appreciated almost as well as straight, truthful User Experience presentations.

Although it may initially seem counter productive when, in a market segment where you have competition – some of whom may even be present - you present 'What is the problem' (generically) and 'What are the various options for a remedy' (again Generically), which appears to give the 'answer' to the problem to the User – so he/she can go and try and fix it themselves – and to the competition – so that they can emulate your message and your solution.

However, that misses the point. You will be the person presenting! If you explain the 'Problem' clearly then discuss the many ways to address it and the path you think is best (at an abstract and very high level), that will be enough for the audience to look to you as the 'Oracle'. You will put across that you understand the problem (90% of the battle) and that you can see a number of resolutions to the problem (a further 10% of the battle) and the 'Reveal' can come later.



The content and the flow

The initial content of the presentation should be geared to the generic nature of the problem, the generic User fear/concern about the problem and the generic response to the problem. In this type of environment – a User Group looking for advice – where Users are not looking for details of the ‘Only solution in the world’, presentations that launch into the features and benefits of a product or service that will fix a problem invariably get marked down. Comments like ‘...I didn’t give up my time/spend my money to come here and be sold to...’ are often seen on the Critique Sheets.

Where the content of the presentation is educational, the problem spelled out clearly and the various opportunities to resolve the problem are scoped out, the presentation is welcomed as ‘New Information’.

After many years of working with User Groups and benefiting myself from the many presentations I have seen, it is clear that the educational approach leaves the presenter on a pedestal as the Expert-In-Field and much more likely to be contacted for a discussion. You know yourself that if you have just been given a Hard Sell then you are unlikely to approach the salesman for some ‘advice’ and even less likely to ultimately see yourself working with the vendor to effect a solution.

The ending and the sting in the tail

In the closing of the presentation (In my view, this is better established at the start of the presentation but this is a subjective item), it is accepted that you would reveal your interest in the subject matter and reveal that you have, or you are part of an organisation that has, a solution to the problem (the Reveal). This could take many forms including general advice, a service or a software product and it is the opportunity for you to guide the audience to a point where they can speak to you after the presentation.

This distancing of your own vested interest from the User problem in the subject matter is not only good practice but it is a powerful enabler to business as the threat of sales hounding is removed and the opportunity for a partnering is enhanced.

Previous scorings based on approach

As an organisation, and from my own experience in previous organisations, it is quite apparent that Users mark the scores down on the sales style presentations and mark the scores up on the educational style presentations – even though both may come from Vendors...

As a further encouragement, you need to be aware that we would endorse and support such scoring behaviour and we have often refused Vendors the opportunity to engage with the group, let alone present to the group, where we feel Users are antagonised by overtly sales based presentations or approaches.